

A NOTE ON THE POSITION OF RHINOCEROS IN THE UNION OF BURMA (1953)

BY

U. TUN YIN

In the course of official duties in the Kachin State from March 1951 to February 1952, the writer had occasion to visit Putao (Fort Hertz), Lonkhin and Hapkan in the Uyu drainage, Bhamo, Sinlum, Sadon and Lauk Naung, and collected information about the position of Rhino in the Kachin State. The writer also received information in respect of the Rhino in the Shwe-U-Daung Sanctuary.

In August 1953, Mr. E. P. Gee inquired about the Rhino population and the places where they existed. The Chief Conservator of Forests very kindly permitted the writer to go through the Annual Reports on Forest Administration 1945-46 to 1950-51, received in his office from the Conservators of Forests of the various Circles and Principal Forest Officer, Shan States.

The present note is an attempt to supplement the note prepared by Mr. W. F. H. Ansell in 1947 (*J.B.N.H.S.*, Vol. 47, No. 2, page 258 *et seq.*) and to bring it up to date.

The writer would like to express gratitude to the Chief Conservator of Forests (U Kyaw Kine), Silviculturist (U Aung Din), all the Forest Officers and Members of Parliament who have helped him in the compilation of this note.

The following is a summary of information :

Rhinoceros sondaicus The Smaller One-Horned or Javan Rhinoceros.

In 1939-40 the Game Warden (F. J. Mustell) received information 'that a Rhinoceros with calf was seen by Karen villagers in their *taungyas* at the foot of the Kyaiktiyo Hill which is situated on the border of Thaton and Pegu Districts. The villagers' description of the animal closely corresponds to that of the Javan Rhinoceros.'

These two animals were reported to be frequenting the environs of Kyaiktiyo Pogoda up to the end of the year ending the 30th September, 1949. The area has since been under occupation by the Karen insurgents, and no attempt could therefore be made to identify the species and no further information is available.

Dicerorhinus sumatrensis The Sumatran Two-Horned Rhinoceros.

(a) *The Shwe-U-Daung Sanctuary.*

The Divisional Forest Officer, Mong Mit Division, visited the Sanctuary in April 1948. He did not actually see one, but came across fresh tracks of rhinoceros and also a month-old spoor of a cow rhinoceros with a calf at heel. The Range Officer saw a rhinoceros in a mud wallow in May 1948. The Divisional Forest Officer, after sifting available evidence, came to the conclusion 'that despite poaching

there are approximately 4-5 rhinoceros in the Mong Mit sector of the Sanctuary.'

The Range Officer, Thabeitkyin, reported (1950-51) one male, one cow and one calf rhinoceros in Katha East (Burma) sector. But in 1952 the writer learnt that three of these rare animals had been shot in the Sanctuary, one under a special licence issued to the Mahadevi of Mong Mit, for medicinal purposes, and two illicitly by the Shan hunters.

If any *D. sumatrensis* still exist in the Sanctuary, there cannot be more than two to three individuals.

The report of the Divisional Forest Officers, Mong Mit Division, and the case of the two *D. sumatrensis* referred to above should dispel the doubts of all people who are inclined to believe in the legend that the mountain spirits of Shwe-U-Daung do not like poaching.

(b) *Arakan Yoma.*

Thiri Pyanchi U Son Nein, M.P. Chin Hills, informed the writer (September 1953) that he saw fresh tracks of a rhino on Lontin Hill between Matupi and Kanpetlet, and that a villager from Paletwa also saw a rhino in Bigon forests between Matupi and Paletwa in May 1953. If not identical, this area probably adjoins the areas where during the Arakan campaign, the special patrols saw a rhino about 15 miles north-east of Paletwa in January 1944 and a second rhino about 25 miles east of Paletwa in April 1944. See the areas marked by Gen. Christison on his map. (*Journ., Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*, 45 (2) 1945).

The writer crossed over the Arakan Yoma from Padaung to Taungup and back to Padaung in February 1946, when he was informed of an area where rhino then existed. It may be the area marked almost midway between Sandoway and Prome by Gen. Christison on his map.

(c) *Pegu Yoma.*

In paragraph 55 of the Annual Report on Game Preservation in Burma for the year ending 31st March 1940, it is stated that the Divisional Forest Officer, Tharrawaddy Division, found fresh rhinoceros tracks on Sanwingan Hill. The Divisional Forest Officer, Tharrawaddy, referred to is U Aung Din, who is now Silviculturist, Burma. A Karen forester who was down in Rangoon recently informed me that there are two rhinoceros surviving in the Zamayi Reserve, Pegu Forest Division. The animals were seen in 1952. Zamayi Forest Reserve is in the upper reaches of the Pegu River.

U Aung Din informed the writer (September 1953) that he found tracks of two rhino at the source of Thounze chaung on the Pegu Yoma. U Aung Din on his revisit to the same area in 1945, took pains to enquire about the two rhino and was informed that one of the two rhino had been shot by the Karens.

Shwelaung chaung, referred to by Mr. Ansell, is a feeder of the Pegu River. The source is in the Pegu Yoma. So is Saing chaung where Messrs. Vernay and Percy Smith shot a specimen for the South Asiatic Hall of the American Museum of Natural History.

Between 1922 and 1926, the writer made several trips after bison and tsaing up Shwelaung chaung, Kawliya chaung and Baingda chaungs. The writer met a Karen hunter (Nauk To) who had shot four rhino, and was informed of a pocket on the Pegu Yoma where there were at least 4 to 6 rhino. The area is somewhere west of Penwagon on the Rangoon Mandalay line. It is possible that the area referred by Mr. Ansell 'exact locality not stated but probably north-west of Pegu', is the same area of which the writer received information in 1926. There may still be few specimens surviving in this area.

(d) *Uyu River Drainage Area.*

The Conservator of Forests, Northern Circle, estimated that there were about 5 rhinoceros in Nan-Ka-Za and Nan-Yoke-Chaungs, unclaimed forests, Uyu drainage, Katha West Forest Division in 1950-51.

The writer visited Lonkhin and Hpakan, in the Jade Mines in August 1951. Both the villages are on the bank of the Uyu River. At Hpakan the writer met the headman of Lassai Tract and learnt that a rhino was shot in the dense jungles near Kungsai in November 1949, that a few rhinoceros had been shot in the past and that some 3 or 4 specimens still exist in the area. As the centre for jade mining, the population of Hpakan is predominantly Chinese. The Laisai Chins often visit Hpakan to sell rhino horn and blood to the Chinese.

In December 1949 when the Deputy Commissioner, Myitkyina, was camping at Haungpa on the Chindwin River, the Laisai Duwa presented the Deputy Commissioner with a rhino horn. It is possible that this horn is from the rhino shot in November 1949.

The rhino in the Uyu drainage area would eventually be shot out.

(e) *Kahilu Sanctuary.*

In 1948 '*Rhinoceros sumatrensis* were reported seen occasionally'. The area has been under occupation of Karen insurgents and no report has been received since.

(f) *Tenasserim Peninsula.*

Annual Report on Forest Administration for the year ending 31st September 1951 from the Conservator of Forests, Marinetine Circle, merely mentions that rhinoceros are reported to exist in the unclassified forests, Victoria Point Range. The writer has not been able to obtain any information from the area. It is doubtful whether any rhino now exist in Tavoy-Mergui Forest Division. Some of the wolfram mines are situated in the areas which were once the habitat of both *Rhinoceros sondaicus* and *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*. There has also been extensive poaching by Thais. The areas in Tavoy-Mergui Forest Division are at present under occupation by underground communists and Karen insurgents.

In the Yechaung Reserves of Ataran Division mentioned in paragraph 55 of the Annual Report on Game Preservation for the year ending 31st March 1940, there may still be an isolated specimen or two if they have not already been poached by the Thais.

The writer was at the source of Yechaung when he was urgently recalled on 2nd December 1941. The writer was then informed of a large rhino on the Tenasserim Yoma.

A statement in Mr. Ansell's note may be corrected: Mt. Mulayit is in Ataran Forest Division, Amherst District, and not in Mergui District which is in Tavoy-Mergui Forest Division.

(g) *Bhamo Area.* Rhino shot in early 1946.

Duwa Zau Lun, Head of the Kachin State, very kindly furnished the writer with a sketch map showing the track of the rhino. The rhino first seen in the Kauk-Kwa valley, crossed the Irrawaddy River, Wilatha Hills, the Taping River, a feeder of the Irrawaddy, and was eventually shot in the Maubin tract by the Shans. U Hla Pe, Lecturer, Faculty of Forests, University College, was assistant to the Divisional Forest Officer, Bhamo Division (Mr. Maxwell) in 1945-46. U Hla Pe informed the writer that the case was burked by the villagers and that he began to hear whispers long after the rhino had been shot, and was informed that the villagers did not know that the strange animal which charged the village buffaloes was a rhino, and that the rhino was shot only when the villagers came to know that the strange animal was the rare and valuable animal.

From Duwa Zau Lun's account, two facts are disclosed:—

(1) The rhino was not a wanderer from the Shwe-U-Daung Sanctuary.

(2) A rhino could swim across a river as wide as the Irrawaddy.

U Gyi Htein Nan, Finance Minister, Kachin State, was in charge of the range before his retirement from Service in the Forest Department of the Union Government. He informed the writer that a rhino had previously been shot in the Sadon Area in 1927. This area is on the east bank of the Irrawaddy and adjoins the Bhamo area. In 1931 a rhinoceros crossed the Uyu drainage, came within five miles of the railway line near Nansiaung in the Katha West Forest Division and was shot by a Kachin. In 1932, another rhinoceros came over from the Uyu drainage into the Nami and Ledan valleys, Mansi-Katha Division, during the cold weather, crossed the Indaw Banmauk road in the south and headed for the Meza chaung.

In 1936 an assistant of Messrs. The Bombay Burma Trading Corporation Limited saw a rhinoceros on the left bank of the Uyu stream in Katha West Forest Division. In the same year a rhinoceros was shot by Kachins in Nanyin Kha Reserves, Myitkina Forest Division.

During December 1939 a rhinoceros was reported in the lower Uyu valley, Katha West Forest Division. U Gyi Htein Nan is definite that all these animals came from Taungthonlon, an extinct volcano North of Mansi, Katha West Forest Division. Very little is known of this region and its fauna.

(h) *Myitkyina Area.*

'Peacock mentions parts of Myitkyina as locations (or former locations) of *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*' (*Journ., Bomb. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, Vol. 47 (2) p. 260, 1947).

The writer has no idea of the locations mentioned by Peacock.

When the writer visited Putao in December 1951, he was informed of a *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* shot by a Lishu hunter on Mansi Likun Hills in 1943.

The Manse Sawbwa received the posterior horn and some dried blood.

Mr. Sanhta Seng, Parliamentary Secretary, informed the writer (September 1953) that the Kachins believe the posterior horn alone to be efficacious, the anterior horn is only a protection to the posterior horn and is of no value to Kachins.

Mr. Sanhta Seng estimated from 4 to 6 species of *D. sumatrensis* still surviving in the Nam Lang Valley.

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